

**Coming Clean About *The Cleaner* - Phoenix House's Chief
Clinical Officer David Deitch on Intervention, and the
Recovery Process That Follows**

"Back for a second season is A&E's hit series *The Cleaner*, with Benjamin Bratt starring as an 'extreme interventionist,' a character based on the life of the show's co-executive producer Warren Boyd. What's encouraging about *The Cleaner* is the exposure the series gives to drug misuse and the nature of addictive behavior. With more than 23 million Americans misusing drugs these days, there's a vital public safety purpose served by bringing to light the dangers to health and safety when drug misuse leads to addictive behavior," says **David Deitch**, Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer of **Phoenix House**, the nation's largest non-profit alcohol and drug abuse treatment and prevention facility.

"The great strength of *The Cleaner* is the show's ability to dramatize the downward spiral of addiction, showing how drug misusers 'get stuck,' and the difficulty they have of getting 'unstuck.' In life, as on TV, an 'intervention' is often the means of 'unsticking' someone deep in drug misuse. Interventions may indeed be as dramatic as kidnapping or substituting sugar for the user's drug of choice. But, while bringing together a team of 'significant others' to 'confront' the user makes for good viewing, it actually occurs rarely. There is an extraordinarily broad range of intervention strategies and they are employed every day in any number of different venues - family dining rooms and kitchens, therapist's offices, business offices, factory floors, lecture halls, and hospital emergency rooms.

"The process of getting the drug misuser 'unstuck' can begin in any one of these settings - but it only begins there. An intervention just starts the process, because getting unstuck requires serious engagement of the individual in a [program of treatment](#) responsive to his or her unique needs - a process pursued in an appropriate setting and involving others. These others may be trained professionals. They may be men and women with similar histories of drug involvement. A community of faith may be a critical part of this recovery process, as well as friends and family. Medications may be involved, cognitive behavioral therapies, prayer, hope, encouragement, and

opportunities to learn about oneself and master the skills needed to offset the long-lasting craving that comes with addictive behavior.

"In short, while 'intervention' may be as dramatic as those of *The Cleaner* or - as is more often the case - slow and guided, what counts is what follows!

"We at [Phoenix House](#) have learned that what follows is a process of learning how best to achieve lifestyle change and continuing recovery. It is a process that varies from person to person. Each day, Phoenix House cares for more than 7,000 people in various settings and stages of recovery. We pledge that each receives the help he or she needs and each is treated with professionalism and respect. We recognize differences in need and our service delivery continuum is designed to respond to these differences.

"And, while *The Cleaner* deserves our applause, viewers also deserve to know that, no matter how getting unstuck begins, the greater need is for the rest of the process, which is what most of our field is there to provide."

David Deitch is the Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer of Phoenix House. He has more than 45 years of national and international experience in the development of drug abuse treatment systems for adolescents and adults.

[Phoenix House](#) is one of the nation's leading non-profit substance abuse prevention and treatment service organizations, serving close to 7,500 men, women (including women with children), and teens each day at more than 152 drug and alcohol treatment and prevention programs in 10 states - California, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont. For information, visit www.phoenixhouse.org.

This piece is the third entry in Phoenix House's new blog, "Rising Above Addiction" (<http://phoenixhouse.wordpress.com>). For more information, or to speak with Dr. Deitch, CEO Howard Meitiner, or other experts at Phoenix House, please contact Davia Temin or

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